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DEPARTMENT AWARDS CONTRACT TO CONNECT EVERY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL TO WIRELESS INTERNET

BOISE – The Idaho State Department of Education has awarded a five-year contract to Education Networks of America (ENA) for a managed service that will provide uninterrupted, high-speed wireless internet access in public high schools in Idaho.

Through Senate Bill 1200, the Idaho Legislature appropriated \$2.25 million “for the installation, repair, replacement and support of a wireless technology infrastructure, in each public school serving high school grades, of sufficient capacity to support utilization of mobile computing devices by all students in such grades.”

“As a state, it is our goal and our responsibility to ensure every child has equal access to the best educational opportunities, no matter where they live. To accomplish this, we have to equip every public high school with the advanced technology and tools necessary to create these opportunities,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said. “Wireless internet access is a critical component of the 21st Century Classroom so teachers can integrate the technology they need in the classroom, whether it is one-to-one devices or other mobile technology that improves learning and engages students in the digital world they live in today.”

In June, the state released a Request for Proposals for a managed service to provide uninterrupted, high-speed wireless internet access in public high schools in Idaho. Nine companies offered bids. After a thorough review process, an independent review committee, representing school district officials, technology experts and Department staff, unanimously recommended the state award Education Networks of America, or ENA. ENA’s bid came in under budget at \$2,111,655 per year.

Multi-year contracts with optional renewal periods are a standard practice, according to the Idaho Division of Purchasing, to secure the best value for the money being spent. Every multi-year contract is subject to appropriation by the Legislature each year. If funding is not available, the state can terminate the contract without penalty.

ENA has a history of working with schools in the State of Idaho. ENA is the lead contractor for the successful Idaho Education Network project, which has connected every public high school in Idaho to high-speed broadband intranet access.

Through this statewide contract, ENA will deliver a managed service that provides wireless connectivity as well as the necessary security, content filtering and project management. The network within the statewide contract will be able to support all modern wireless technologies, such as laptops and tablets.

The state selected a managed service rather than buying the infrastructure because it is more cost-effective. Buying and managing wireless infrastructure in-house costs millions more than contracting with a third party. In addition, wireless technology changes rapidly. Through a managed service, the vendor – not the state – is responsible for updating technology throughout the life of the contract.

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The state's wireless network will work alongside the Idaho Education Network and any existing network a school or district might already have in place. High schools will not be required to participate; schools that already have high-speed wireless may choose not to participate in the statewide contract.

To date, nearly 50 school districts already have signed up to participate in the statewide wireless solution.

"I cannot express what a fantastic opportunity this is for our students," said Alan Dunn, Superintendent of the Sugar-Salem School District. "Everyday students have access to more and more technology, and we want to use this technology to communicate in ways that are most meaningful to them. We anticipate that in the near future every student will have multiple ways to access the internet to enhance their educational experience, which will require robust wireless capabilities."

Heather Williams, Superintendent of the Gooding School District, said, "In today's classroom, we are asking our teachers and students to draw from multiple sources of information to create a dynamic learning environment that is relevant and rigorous for every child. To support this, we must have high-speed wireless access throughout our building."

"The Middleton School District appreciates this financial opportunity being provided by the SDE that will allow our high school to enhance our wireless connectivity, which helps prepare us for our Go One – Go On 1:1 Middleton High School laptop initiative. This opportunity will help ensure that our students have the needed reliable connectivity for daily research, lessons, and required testing with our new 1:1 laptops," said Richard Bauscher, Superintendent of the Middleton School District.

Districts or public charter schools must inform the Idaho State Department of Education by August 1, 2013 if they would like to be connected to the state's wireless system this school year. They can choose to opt in in future years as well.

All public high schools that opt in for the state's managed wireless service are estimated to be connected by March 2014.

More information about the statewide wireless solution for public high schools is available online at http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/tech_services/requestForProposal.htm.

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